

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PEPRS, PINT, PN

SUBJECT: LIBERAL PARTY AND OTHERS REJECT TREATY AMENDMENTS

SUMMARY: IN A MANIFESTO AND LETTER TO THE U.S. AMBASSADOR PUBLISHED APRIL 6, THE LIBERAL PARTY REVERSED ITS FORMER SUPPORT OF THE NEW TREATIES ON THE GROUNDS THAT SOME OF "...THE AMENDMENTS, RESERVATIONS, UNDERSTANDINGS AND NEW MATTERS INTRODUCED...ARE CONTRARY TO THE ARTICLES ALREADY AGREED UPON AND OTHERS ARE DAMAGING TO THE DIGNITY OF OUR FATHERLAND." THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY DECLARED IN A COMMUNIQUE THE SAME DAY THAT THE SENATE ACTIONS TURN THIS "...INTO A NEW TREATY SUBJECT TO LATER NEGOTIATION, APPROVAL AND SIGNATURE." AND THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE DECLARED ON APRIL 5 THAT IN ITS RATIFIED FORM, THE NEUTRALITY TREATY IS "AN OPEN AFFRONT TO THE NATIONAL DIGNITY OF ALL PANAMANIAN." DESPITE CONTINUED OFFICIAL GOP SILENCE, PANAMA IS FAST RUNNING OUT OF NOTEWORTHY PUBLIC OR POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS WHICH HAVE NOT TAKEN SUCH STANDS. END SUMMARY.

1. ON APRIL 6, JULIO HARRIS, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE

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LIBERAL PARTY, CALLED ON DCM TO DELIVER A LETTER TO AMBASSADOR AND A COPY OF A MANIFESTO BY THE PARTY ON THE NEUTRALITY TREATY AS RATIFIED BY THE SENATE. LETTER AND MANIFESTO WERE RELEASED TO MEDIA SAME DAY, AND WERE PRINTED IN APRIL 7 "CRITICA" AND "MATUTINO". (TEXT OF MANIFESTO FBIS/PANAMA PA 0701226, TEXT OF LETTER WILL BE PROCESSED.)

2. MANIFESTO NOTES THAT PARTY RECOMMENDED RATIFICATION OF NEW TREATIES IN OCTOBER 1977 AS THE BEST THAT COULD BE OBTAINED, AND AS A BASIS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PANAMA AND THE U.S. DURING SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS WITH GROUPS OF U.S. SENATORS, PARTY SPOKESMEN STRESSED THAT AMENDMENTS OR MODIFICATIONS OF THE TREATIES WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE"...AS WE WERE AWARE THAT THIS WOULD IN MANY WAYS DISTORT THE CONTENT OF WHAT WAS ALREADY AGREED UPON AND THAT IT WAS LOGICAL TO ASSUME THAT THE AMENDMENTS WOULD, IN ANY CASE, NOT BE FAVORABLE TO OUR COUNTRY." MANIFESTO THEN NOTES THAT "THE FACT IS THAT AMENDMENTS, RESERVATIONS, UNDERSTANDINGS AND NEW MATTERS WERE INTRODUCED...WHICH DISTORT THE ARTICLES THAT WERE ALREADY AGREED UPON. AMONG THEM ARE THE DECONCINI AND NUNN RESERVATIONS, WHICH IN ADDITION TO CONTRADICTING THE CONTENT OF THE ARTICLES THEY TRY TO CLARIFY, ARE OFFESIVE TO THE SOVEREIGN DIGNITY OF PANAMA." THEREFORE, THE PARTY "EXPRESSES ITS REJECTION" OF THE SENATE ACTIONS.

3. THE PARTY LETTER TO THE AMBASSADOR BRIEFLY SUMMARIZED THE PARTY POSITION REFLECTED IN THE MANIFESTO, REITERATING THE PARTY'S INTEREST IN BUILDING A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. AND RECALLING PANAMA'S RECORD OF 70 YEARS OF LOYAL SUPPORT TO THE CANAL OPERATION.
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BUT THE SENATE ACTIONS WERE "WOUNDS TO PANAMANIAN SOVEREIGNTY." THE PARTY WAS CONCERNED THAT THEY WILL JEOPARDIZE THE CHANCES OF SUCH A NEW RELATIONSHIP HERE IN PANAMA, AND FEARED THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR BOTH COUNTRIES ARISING FROM SUCH A SITUATION.

4. ON THE EVENING OF APRIL 6, LOCAL TELEVISION NEWSCASTS REPORTED A COMMUNIQUE BY THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY, WHICH CONSIDERED THAT THE SENATE"... AGREED ONLY IN REJECTING THE TREATIES NEGOTIATED BY PANAMA AND APPROVED IN A PLEBISCITE LAST OCTOBER 23." COMMUNIQUE SAID THE SENATE ACTIONS"...HAVE MADE MORE ACUTE THE CAUSES OF CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES" AND CONCLUDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT"...SHOULD CONSIDER THE TREATIES AS BEING UNACCEPTABLE TO OUR NATIONAL HONOR AND...THAT EVEN THE PRESENTING OF THE AMENDMENT TO A PLEBISCITE WOULD BE OFFENSIVE TO PANAMA'S HISTORIAL STRUGGLE." (FBIS/PANAMA PA 070122Y)

5. ON APRIL 5, EVENING "LA REPUBLIC" PRINTED A STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE (CONEP), DELIVERED BY THAT ORGANIZATIONS' PRESIDENT,

PEDRO ROGNONI. THIS STATEMENT SAID THE NEUTRALITY TREATY, AS RATIFIED BY THE SENATE,"...IN ITS PRESENT FORM...IS AN OPEN AFFRONT TO THE NATIONAL DIGNITY OF ALL PANAMANIAN; WE WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT THE TREATY IS THE ANSWER FOR THOSE OF US WHO SUPPORT THE ROAD OF NEGOTIATION, BUT IS IS OBVOUS THAT IN THE AMENDMENTS ONE ENCOUNTERS JUSTIFICATION FOR THOSE WHO WIELD THE CONCEPT OF VIOLENCE AS THE ONLY ROAD TO LIBERATION." (FBIS/PANAMA PA071554Y)

6. COMMENT: THE LIBERAL PARTY'S SUPPORT OF THE TREATIES IN LAST OCTOBER'S PLEBISCITE WAS CONSIDERED BY SOME KNOWLEDGABLE PANAMANIAN OBSERVERS AS ONE CAUSE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S AMASSING AS LARGE A MAJORITY AS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IT DID. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ARE SMALLER, AND THEIR PREVIOUS STAND WAS FAR MORE EQUIVOCAL DUE TO THEIR OPPOSITION TO TORRIJOS, BUT THE PARTY IS RESPECTED. CONCEP, AND PARTICULARLY ROGNONI, HAVE ALSO FAVORED THE TREATIES; ROGNONI AND THE ORGANIZATION BOTH HAVE CONSIDERABLE STATURE LOCALLY, AND ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR ATTITUDE OF COOPERATION WITH A GOVERNMENT WITH WHICH THEY ARE NOT BASICALLY IN SYMPATHY. WITH THIS TRIPLE WHAMMY, PANAMA IS FAST RUNNING OUT OF CIVIC, ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS OF ANY NOTE WHICH HAVE NOT DECLARED THEMSELVES PUBLICLY AGAINST THE DECONCINI PROVISION IN PARTICULAR OR AGAINST THE NEUTRALITY TREATY AS RATIFIED BY THE SENATE.
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